DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 347 FL 016 880

AUTHOR Banning, Bernadine
TITLE Background Briefing for Student Teachers Going to Latin America.
PUB DATE [87]
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Climate; Cultural Context; *Cultural Differences; Culture Conflict; Daily Living Skills; *Foreign Countries; Geography; Health Services; History; *Interpersonal Communication; *Latin American Culture; Legal Problems; Monetary Systems; Recreational Activities; Religion; *Social Values; Student Teachers; Study Abroad; Teacher Exchange Programs; Transportation; Travel
IDENTIFIERS *Dominican Republic; *Mexico

ABSTRACT

A guide for student teachers planning to travel or work in Latin America contains general information about living in Latin America and profiles of Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The general information addresses these issues: travel, what to take along, culture shock, greetings, generalizations about Hispanic culture, values, given names and surnames, profanity, reading signs, space and noise, machismo, regionalism, religion, "personalismo," shopping, entertainment, servants, and public transportation. The sections on Mexico and the Dominican Republic offer information on topics such as geography, climate, national history and heritage, international relations, government, educational systems, food, money matters, holidays, clothing, entry requirements, religion, and health problems. Additional readings are suggested for each section. (MSE)

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BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR STUDENT TEACHERS GOING TO LATIN AMERICA

BY BERNADINE BANNING, PH.D.

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BACKGROUND BRIEFING FOR STUDENTS GOING TO LATIN AMERICA

General Travel Information

Contrary to popular notions, American consulates and embassies are not travel agencies, law offices, banks, or hostels. The staff will not exchange or lend money, post bail, tend the sick, or provide sleeping bags. You should not expect that a consul will be able to help you if you are ill (other than, perhaps, to give you tha name of an English-speaking doctor), if you have travel difficulties with reservations, or if you get in trouble with the legal system of another country. YOU ARE SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF THAT COUNTY, NOT THE U. S. LAWS, AND IGNORANCE OF THE LAW IS AN UNACCEPTABLE PLEA. YOUR HOST SCHOOL WILL ASSIST YOU AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

What to Take With You

Take as little as possible. The Experiment in International Living used this simple test: Can you carry your own packed luggage 200 yards? Do take the following: 1. prescriptions for glasses or medications you must take. (You may break a lens or lose the medicine.) 2. as much film as you think you will use and customs regulations permit. (Color film prices are higher and may require developing there.) 3. a small notebook to keep a journal of your experiences and observations. 4. two billfolds or coin purses to keep foreign and U.S. currency separate. 5. a small flashlight for emergencies. 6. snapshots of your family and the university. Do not take valuable jewelry.

Do not expect your parents or anyone else to send you anything. You may not receive the items (inadequate postal service) and you will probably have to pay duty, equal to the declared value of the item or more . Also do not expect to use long distance much because you will have to pay a high, luxury tax on all long distance international calls. Sometimes technically inadequate local phone systems make long distance calls difficult, if not impossible. In some areas you may have to use a special telephone location to make such calls. At the same time, remember that your host school will help you in the event of a real emergency.

Cultural Shock

When people of two different cultures come in contact, at first each group usually notices only differences . Frequently a practice, so common in one culture as to be hardly noticed, is considered rude, ugly, obscene, or immoral in another. Table manners in the U. S. proscribe elbows on the table and prescribe keeping hand(s) not in use on the lap, but for the Hispanic such behavior is bad manners, bordering on the obscene. Both hands should remain above the table and an Hispanic Miss Manners would tell you to rest your arms on the table during the conversation period following a meal. Similarly, many business men do not hesitate to sit down on the

edge of a colleague's desk, an action considered rude in Latin America.

In all likelihood, you will suffer at least temporarily from cultural shock, but being prepared will help to overcome this. The symptoms include: excessive concern for cleanliness of water, or food, or accomodations, constant hand washing, fear of contact with persons of the other culture, and seeking out long-term residents of your nationality (to hide in a ghetto of Americans). The cure is to learn how to get around by yourself and to learn some Spanish. (Your host school may have classes in Spanish, or will help you arrange for lessons.) If you notice that you are becoming critical and hostile, first, try to take the position of an unbiased observer, and then discuss your observations with a person who has had long-term, in-country experience. Usually these feelings do not last long and once again you can begin to feel the excitement of living abroad.

The culturally sophisticated person quickly recovers from cultural shock and rapidly learns to accept the behavior of natives. At the same time a visitor also learns not to do those things which seem "natural," but shock the other people. This is the real meaning of the old saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Greetings

When a Spanish speaker joins a group of people at a table in a cafe or at a party, he shakes hands with each individual and greets each personally. He also shakes hands with everyone a second time upon leaving the group. Because of this, many Spanish speakers consider us impolite, since we often simply say "Hello" or "Good-bye" to a group and we do not always shake everyone's hand when being introduced and never as we leave. Often, in the U.S. married couples and sweethearts greet each other with a hug, while in the Hispanic world men, quite properly, greet each other with a big hug called un abrazo (embrace).

Generalizations about Hispanic Culture

Nothing is static about people's values, but the rate of change in Latin America is extraordinarily rapid. According to Galo Plaza Lasso, the former Secretary General of the Organization of American States: "Every country of Latin America has its distinctive profile. But all have one thing in common: they are in the throes of transformation, more pervasive, dramatic, and fundamental than at any other time in history....Urgent demands for economic and social development are forcing Latin America to move away from the contemplative attitude toward time. (Nevertheless the Hispanic) culture will demand a balance between this new sense of urgency and our

traditional attitude of contemplation."

The broad classification of the Hispanic world includes all those nations and parts of our own nation using Spanish as the primary medium of comunication. That encompases many, many millions of people in different geographic areas of the world for Latin America alone occupies about one-six of the planet's land surface.

Being a part of the Third World means wide-spread poverty. By and large the economies of Spanish-speaking countries do not create enough wealth to enjoy the same standard of living as the United States. In wealthier states of the U. S. people on welfare have higher yearly incomes than many who work for a living in Latin America. Fear of repression and physical danger from civil wars (Central America) prompt many illegal aliens to cross U.S. borders, but another primary reason is a better life for themselves and for their families.

Values

Spanish conquistadors found in most areas an Indian population with already highly developed skills. Thus, Spain acquired not only new territory, but also a labor force large enough so that few Spaniards had to work in the fields or mines. In contrast, when the Indians of the Eastern U. S. could not be turned into a work force, the English survived only by their own efforts. The circumstances of colonial settlements led to two quite different cultural attitudes towards work and the path to success. Since the English colonists' survival depended upon hard work, no stigma was attached to physical labor, and more importantly still, hard work could bring success to the most humble man. In contrast, success in the Spanish colonies depended upon receiving a royal grant of land and the labor of natives. As a consequence two traditional values developed: 1. confirmation of the belief, inherited from the Middle Ages warrior/nobleman who disdained manual labor, that hard work was undignified, and 2. workers soon learned that hard work did not lead to success. As a result, neither the upper nor the lower class Latin American considers hard work the path to a better life; both find it difficult to understand the drive to succeed in a person who works day and night. This does not mean that they are "lazy." On the contrary, by and large, the Latin American does not have all the labor saving devices we enjoy. You will see men and women working terribly hard.

According to both Latin and Anglo-Saxon traditions, education can lead to advancement and social mobility. You will be working in private schools patterned after the U. S. system of education with students are from families of the wealthiest classes and of technocrats stationed by the

multi-national companies in Latin America. Parents of these students are especially anxious that instruction be of the highest caliber and in English. Because public schools are terribly overcrowded many middle-class families make sacrificies to send their children to such private schools. Roman Catholic religious orders operate the majority of these schools and require pupils to wear uniforms. Traditionally, students at both public and private elementary and secondary institutions wear uniforms, but "American" schools do not have this requirement, another reflection of cultural differences. Teachers may be working at more than one school, or at another job. In the past, teachers received more respect than in the U. S., but, as more material standards of a person's worth are adopted, teachers' low salaries have affected their standing in the community.

A person's prestige in the U. S. can roughly be measured by three criteria: 1. how much he owns, 2. what he does, and 3. family background. The importance of one's family tree continues to be the most significant factor in social prestige in the Hispanic world. A person's name may be more important than his wealth or his capabilities. For example, the Mexican government paid a pension to Cortes' direct decendants for nearly a century after independence from Spain because of the prestige of the family name.

Here an M. D. is regularly addressed as Doctor, while outside of the university a Ph.D. is seldom addressed as Doctor. In both cultures the members of the armed forces are addressed by rank and high governmental officials by title. Latin American feel that a professional title should be used in addressing a person and these include licenciado (a legal degree), arquitecto, ingeniero (engineer), etc. as well as "Doctor."

Children are expected to show proper deference to elders. The fact that a child will not look you in the eyes does not mean that he is not telling the truth, merely that he is exhibiting an appropriate behavior.

How often we say, "Time is money!" A great many of us believe time should not be "wasted" and things should be done as soon as possible. This attitude produces a style of life that is very different from that in the Hispanic world, one which Galo Plaza Lasso called "contemplative." Please do not be offended by an appointment, a meeting, or an interview which does not start at the exact hour scheduled because there is not intention to slight anyone. Since the pace of life is slower, accept the fact that waiters will not bring the bill the minute you finish eating. Expect to find a host or hostess unprepared for guests if you appear prior to of even at the time indicated for the meal or party. Unless you adjust, plan to wait for almost everyone and everything. Slow down and enjoy the time you have in Latin America.

Almost all human affairs in the Hispanic culture are conducted with more ceremony than in the U. S. Introductions and farewells are more elaborate. A Spanish speaker frequently use more words to say what can and should be expressed more briefly in English. There are more rituals to be observed in almost all social situations. For the unaccustomed, the Latin American seems to lack directness, leading to a misinterpretation of insincerity or procrastination.

The majority of people in the U.S. are conditioned to accept planned obsolesence, but the Hispanic has quite a different attitude. You can see twenty- or thirty-year-old cars and one-hundred-year-old steam engines. With the ancient past ever present in the Hispanic world people do not feel the need to replace something after a given length of time. In fact, Latin Americans resist changing something still capable of fulfilling its original purpose.

The Hispanic has a very different attitude towards animals in comparison to that of many people in the U. S. who have a very close attachment to a pet. In sharp contrast, the Spanish speaker has no word at all for "pet" and frequently does not even give names to animals. For the Hispanic animals are in a distinct inferior category inferior to that of people. In general, using animal names to describe people becomes insulting ("burro," "animal"). By the way, the other sort of offensive word(s) is what is called "mentioning the mother," similar to English insults, but even more inflamatory (i.e., s.o.b. is <u>extremely</u> humiliating).

<u>Names and Four-letter Words</u>

Latin Americans think our custom of using religous names and words for swearing is peculiar. Traditionally good Catholics in the Hispanic world give each child at least one name which is also the name of the saint. As a result, many men have Maria as one of their names; and no one is bothered by being called Jose Maria Pereda. Because all the saints' names are commonly used as proper names, they do not have the exclamatory punch needed for swearing. This tradition extends to most religious words; no one uses <u>Dios</u> (god) as a curse. This does not mean, however, that the Spanish do not swear, on the contrary Peninsular Spaniards have a reputation for using many swear words. Each country has developed a special set of swear words of its own, which women do not use and are expected to pretend not to hear or understand.

Remember in Spanish the custom is to use two surnames: Antonio Lopez Munoz. "Lopez," the father's name is followed by the mother's maiden name. Do not make the mistake of calling such a person Mr. Munoz. Mr. Lopez' wife would be named Maria Antonia Perez de Lopez because "de" indicates possession.

Sign Language

While you may not know much or any Spanish and still be able to function completely, there are some signs you will need to read: "Entrada" means "Entrance," "Salida" means "Exit"; "Damas" means "Ladies Room," "Caballeros" means "Men's Room." Arrows about six feet up on any wall at the corner of a steet indicate the direction of a one-way steet, so you will not be looking in the wrong direction for traffic. The use of commas and periods is exactly opposite that in English (1.000.000, a million; 10,4%, 10.4% as written in the U. S.). Transportation and theatre timetables frequently use the twenty-four hour clock. In writing the date the first figure indicates the day, the second indicates the month and the final one, of course, gives the year--November 9, 1986 in Spanish 9/11/86.

Space and Noise

Hispanics' personal space is much smaller than that normally found in the U. S. Here standing closer then eighteen inches is threatening or the first step to intimacy. In Latin America you must learn to tolerate someone standing a lot closer, or you can expect that the Spanish-speaker will simply follow you if you attempt to back away.

In the U. S. the auto horn is used primarily for emergencies, while in most of Latin America the car horn is a part of the driver's equipment used daily: to announce that one is about to pass, or to complain, or to celebrate, or even as a part of political campaigns. Because many narrow streets in older cities have blind corners, an unwritten code gives the person blowing his horn first right of way. A Latin American uses a horn as a substitute for explicit traffic regulations. Until you get used to this, you may feel that city traffic is a constant turmoil of hair-raising emergencies. Problems of noise and congestion, loathed in the U. S., are accepted in under-developed areas of Latin America as signs of progress.

Machismo

Many teenage boys in the U. S. feel a strong emotional necessity to prove publicly they are brave and real he-men by playing "chicken," fighting, or shoplifting. As a badge of manhood boys behave in a rebellious way towards teachers and parents alike. However, by the early twenties that emotional need to keep his manhood on constant display generally disappears. The average Latin teenage male exhibits much of the same attitudes as his U. S. counterparts. You find, however, a significant cultural difference for the Latin American is not so much concerned with "achieving" manhood as with being identified as muy macho (very much a male). As a result, the Latin teenager begins to exhibit aggressive behavior toward girls somewhat earlier than in the U. S.; and, more importantly, he continues to be seriously preoccupied with

exhibiting his maleness after becoming an adult. Believing that a large family is proof that a man is muy macho represents an important obstacle to controlling the population explosion in Latin America.

A male in the U. S. frequently likes to cook, often does not object to doing the dishes (at least to loading the dish washer), and carries groceries to the car without giving the matter a second thought. Hispanics, in contrast, believe it undignified to do "woman's work." Normally men will not carry a baby or a grocery bag on the street. Many would not ever think of doing the dishes or sweeping the floors. This makes for a sharp contrast between what a man and a woman may do in the Hispanic world.

In the U. S. a man standing on the street is not likely to pay compliments to a strange lady as she walks by for this is generally considered rude. He may, however, whistle at her since most women do not take this "wolf whistle" as an insult. A Spanish idiom which describes a verbal comment in a similar situation: echar flores a una persona (to throw flowers at a person),i.e. not impolite.

Proper behavior for the woman is to ignore completely any remarks as any response at all may be misinterpreted. Unfortunately the old double standard still exists for a woman may not go out alone at night without risking some possible unpleasantness nor may she go to the movies or the theatre alone. On the other hand you will find that Latin American women in the middle and upper classes expect and receive gallant attention.

Women use more make-up and jewelry and are generally more fashion conscious than, perhaps, you are accustomed. Both male and female visitors will need to learn to become more formal in dress for work and for parties. Some teachers do wear pants suits, but do not wear jeans, even of the designer variety, to work. Shorts are acceptable only at the beach.

Regionalism

Our extremely mobile society has very highly developed communications media. While these two factors have helped to breakdown regional loyalties and differences so important in our past, in many parts of Latin America communications and transportation are still a major problems. Sixteenth century mule trains and twentieth century airplanes co-exist in many countries. Local geography and climate make travel difficult for millions of people resulting in a strong sense of regional identification. Historically, this in part explains the formation of so many small countries with different customs, social mores, and even dialects (Central America).

Geographic isolation reinforces the bond created by the

traditional family structure. When thinking about family members, you picture what is called the capsular or nuclear family--your mother, father, brothers and sisters. The norm for the Hispanic is the extended family including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins. In fact often a wealthy family lives together in a kind of compound. Even among the middle or lower classes in urban areas, family members probably live in fairly close proximity. The family is the most important structure in Hispanic societies.

Religion

While the U.S. constitution requires separation of church and state Hispanic tradition has been more like that of England with an official state church. Even though most Latin American countries now have no official ties beween government and the Roman Catholic Church, each has an overwhelming Catholic majority. Historically the sons of wealthy families become members of the church's heirarchy or occupied high government posts. For centuries the oldest son of the Spanish family inherited all the father's land while younger sons had to find some other way of earning a living in a dignified manner: army, government, law, education, or the Church. Thus the wealthy families formed an oligarchy controlling the country's wealth and power. With the coming of nineteenth century revolutionary movments the Church regularly joined with the government to oppose the people.

This heritage has created in the Hispanic world attitudes completely foreign to Catholics in the U. S. An Hispanic Catholic may actually hate the institutional church and its priests. This has sometimes resulted in actions which shock many. For example, during Mexico's 1910 Revolution, revolutionaries used a very elegant church as a stable. Even today conflict rages within the Church between the liberation theologists and the Pope.

Now most Latin men are not quite so violent in their attitude toward the Church, but often middle-class people are strongly anti-clerical. As a result, many use the Church only for the most basic rituals: baptism, marriage, and funerals. The majority of church-goers is made up of the rich, the poor, and primarily female.

Personalismo (Loyalty to a Person)

We have a firm tradition in the U. S. of election for public offices by popular vote and a strong two party system. In contrast, for nearly 300 years (the colonial period) Latin America had no such tradition for governmental officials were appointed by the King and church officials appointed by the Pope. Therefore when Independence came in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the people had no practice in running a democracy. Consequently there have been and are

still many dictators in Latin America. Hundreds of revolutions, in practice, have become a substitute for public elections.

One of the noteworthy features of Hispanic culture is that loyalty to personalities and friends is more important than belief in abstractions and general principles. Loyalty in the U. S. is to a political party, whereas the Latin American is loyal to the person who leads the party and, as a result, treat those who oppose him as enemies. When the leader achieves political power, supporters receive rewards since "to the victor goes the spoils," considered proper in Hispanic culture. Frequent revolutions can best be understood when one realizes that personal loyalty to an individual is more important than maintaining an abstract system. The U. S. constitution has been amended infrequently; in contrast, Latin American often suspend constitutional guarantees and then rewrite the constitution to fit the individual leader's personal aims and ambitions. Only two presidents have come very close to removal from office in the U. S., but in almost every Latin country this has happened dozens of times since independence.

Shopping

Many shops in the U. S. sell only one kind of item, but drugstores sell all sorts of things in addition to drugs in contrast to the "farmacia" in Latin America where only drugs are sold. Prices are fixed by the government with many more drugs available over the counter than in the U.S. Be sure you know the dosage for medication because this is not usually indicated on the drug package.

In most U.S. stores items for sale have a price marked by a tag or sticker. Except during sales, the customer does not argue about the fixed price (complain, maybe). Large stores and supermarkets in Latin America also have fixed prices. However, in small shops and the outdoor markets, the prices are subject to bargaining. The seller usually begins by setting a price about 50% above what he thinks the customer will pay. A counter offer should begin at about 75% of that figure and then the haggling becomes a game of wits and patience to see who gives up first. Many tourists do not understand the unwritten rules of this game and often pay more than what the seller would have accepted. On the other hand, sometimes tourists attempt to bargain for everything, which is simply not possible. Usually with an attached or posted price, you can only ask for a discount ("descuento" deskwentow).

Although the custom of siesta is gradually disappearing, shops and offices may still close between one and four and remain open late in the evening. Here's another remnant of the siesta custom: no one makes a social call during the siesta hours and many social functions, especially formal dinners, still begin late in the evening. In addition many people still believe everyone needs a rest period during the

hot part of the day--a sensible practice in tropical areas and southern Spain. The school day schedule releases students at 2:00 for the most important meal of the day and also to permit the traditional rest period.

If you have large feet, you will find comfortable shoes difficult to purchase. Any electronics equipment, including battries, is expensive and older buildings do not have outlets which accept opposable plugs. If you are invited to a meal in someone's home, go to the market and buy flowers--the most appropriate gift for any occasion.

Entertainment

Two nearly universal forms of entertainment are dancing and movies. You will find a movie ticket does not cost much, but the choice of the latest U.S. or European films is limited. Subtitling and dubbing delay the release of films which may be slightly re-titled in Spanish. Although the movie industry in Spain and Latin America cannot fill the demand for entertainment with quality productions, you should see at least one film in Spanish. Be prepared to go to the movie house prior to the sheduled time and to buy a ticket for one showing only at the time indicated on your ticket. Check to see if the theatre offers a discount to students (un descuento).

Many people in the U. S. believe that bullfighting is a national sport in the Hispanic world, but this is a false impression created primarily by just two countries--Spain and Mexico. Bullfights are also scheduled regularly in Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru, but only rarely in other countries. Soccer attracts more attention than bullfighting and, expecially in the Caribbean area, baseball is the most popular spectator sport.

Servants

In the U. S. only the very wealthy can afford to have full-time servants and chauffeurs. In Latin America many people take jobs as servants because this gives them food and a place to live. Often teenagers from rural areas work in a city as servants while going to school, thus relieving their parents of the burden of room, board, and clothing, as well as school expenses. If you live with a family having servants, do not tip, or "loan" money, or become too friendly with a servant.

Public Transportation

Four forms of public transportation are: bus, metro, "peseros," and taxi. A taxi is the most expensive and, unless you can find one with a meter ("taximetro"), the price must be agreed upon before your ride. The name for the "peseros"(in Mexico; other countries have the same system, but different names for this type of service.) comes from the fact that the

charge used to be one peso, but the effect of inflation has increased the price. These vehicles travel a prescribed route carrying only seated passengers more quickly than buses, and charge on the basis of distance traveled. The driver holds his left arm out of the window indicating with the number of extended fingers the number of empty spaces. At your destination, say "Aqui, por favor" (Ah-key, pour fahbor.), pay the driver, dismount from the right side, and carefully shut the door. You may not carry luggage or large packages in a "pesero," or a bus.

Both metro and bus are inexpensive, but often crowded. To hail a bus, find a stop (which may or may not be indicated by a sign at the corner), lift your arm in a signal similar to the "stop" sign for U.S. drivers, i.e. arm held at an angle from the body. As you board the bus, you purchase a ticket which you need to keep in case an inspector checks for tickets. You usually leave the bus by first pulling a cord or pressing a button and dismounting from the rear door. Bus route numbers help you locate the vehicle you should board, but you will need to ask someone the current ticket price.

With first or second class inter-city buses similar to those in the U.S. you can travel comfortably and inexpensively. When you purchase the ticket, be sure that you understand it because you are buying a specific seat and departure (Asiento-seat; Salida or Hora de Salida-departure time). You may check your luggage, but travel light enough that you can carry a small bag aboard and put it under your feet.

Additional Readings

Hall, Edward T. Beyond Culture A basic book you should read.
Hall, Edward T. The Hidden Dimension Time and space in many cultures.
Hall, Edward T. The Silent Language Non-verbal communication.
Mayers, Marvin K. A Look at Latin American Lifestyles Reliable information, but not especially well written.
Wolf, Eric R. and Edward C. Hansen. The Human Condition in Latin America The lasting effects of a colonial regime.

MEXICO

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Geography

Mexico, about one-quarter of the size of the continental U. S., is a country shaped like a cornucopia. Most of the territory is rugged mountains, jungle area, or desert with only about 50% arable land.

Climate

Although Mexico lies within a tropical zone, altitude determines climate. The half above 3,000 ft. has a warm, temperate climate, but below 3,000 ft lie the tierra caliente (hot land). Another important factor for both the climate and agriculture is the amount of rain. The mountains and central volcanic highlands have a rainy season from the end of the month of May till September with almost daily, heavy afternoon showers. Gulf Coast lowlands receive more rain throughout the year.

Guadalajara, located in the Bajio, called the "lowlands," meaning lower than Mexico City at 7,000 feet, is the country's second largest city. Close to Guadalajara is Lake Chapala, the largest in Mexico and home to many retired persons from the U. S. and Canada. At least 27,000 English-speaking resident aliens live in the Guadalajara area.

Mexican History

Prior to the conquest two high civilizations developed in Middle America. The Mayas (in the Yucatan Peninsula) and the Aztecs built monuments still beautiful and impressive today--the Mayas (in the Yucatan Peninsula) and the Aztecs. When the Spaniards arrived they found a densely populated and culturally advanced nation with an urban capital, Tenochtitlan (today's Mexico City), but the whole Aztec empire collapsed within ten short years. As with all European empires, the Spaniards intended to milk the country of its riches (silver, primarily). For 300 years New Spain (the name of the Spanish colony) was one of the most important and most culturally advanced European settlements in the New World. The crown followed a policy which caused friction: European-born Spaniards always held the top posts in both the colonial administration and the Church. Mexican-born Spaniards (creoles), considered socially and politically inferior, led independence movements. After initial revolts failed, a young mestizo (mixed blood, Spanish and Indian) military officer came up with an acceptable peace plan: Mexico became an independent monarch with Augustin Iturbide as its first emperor. However he lacked the ability to solve the new nation's problems. Following his abdication in 1823, the next fifty years chaos reigned. The dominate figure of this early history was Santa

Anna (the battle of the Alamo), in and out of the presidency eleven times. By the mid-1800's two policial groups formed, but when Liberal elected the first Indian president (Benito Juarez), some of the Conservatives helped the French to set up a second emperor, Maximilian and his consort, Carlota. (If you visit the Chapultepec Castle Museaum, you can see some of the Castle's furnishings from that time.) As soon as the French withdrew their army, the empire crumbled, but the war produced Mexico's next strong man--Porfirio Diaz. The overthrow of Diaz came with the Revolution of 1910, which began a period of political instability lasting into the 1940's. Nevertheless out of this period came a new constitution and profound social changes limiting the power of the church and destroying the old landed oligarchy.

The Indian Heritage

Indians were considered wards of the crown, whose duty lie in converting, civilizing, and protecting the natives through its arm, the Church. Therefore, the Church rapidly became the most powerful and wealthy force in Colonial Mexico an continued in that role until the twentieth century. As a fuctioning, if lowly, member of society, the Indian's agricultural knowledge provided food for New Spain. His women became the mothers of future generations because few Spanish women emigrated. The Spanish-born remained a small minority because many, like Cortes himself, returned to Spain once they made a fortune. By the time of Independence (1821) the population consisted mainly of Indians and mestizos (mixed Spanish and Indian). Today mestizos comprise about 95 per cent of the pouplation with fewer than two million speakers of Indian languages (one of the current tests of cultural identity).

The overwhelming Indian heritage modified by the development of the mestizo takes a curious form in the contemporary Mexican. Negatively the Mexican refuses to accept either of his origins for he cannot identity with the Indian, a conquered and abject people. Nor can he identify with the Spaniard, despised for centuries as conquerors and oppressors.

Today the Mexican chooses a new starting point--the ongoing Revolution. (The name of the political party which has dominated Mexican politics since the 20's is the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)--two names which would seem to be contradictory, but Mexicans make it work.) Strenously denying that he is either Indian or Spanish, he is something else, unidentifiable--his own man, a child of the Revolution. (The Revolution of 1910 which did indeed change the whole of Mexican society taking it from a feudal, agrarian one to a mixture of socialism and capitalism.)

The deep contradictions of denial and affirmation of his heritage in the Mexican temperament take form in outward expressions. As passionate admirers of national heroes, they erect statues with prodigality or commission panoramic murals

of historical figures. However you can find no monuments to Moctezuma, considered a shameful, despised figure because he gave in to the Spaniards. In fact the only pre-Revolutionary hero, memorialized throughout Mexico is Cuauhtemoc, the idealized Aztec ruler who succeeded Moctezuma, resisted the Spanish, and was murdered by Cortes after reigning for only a few months. Dona Marina--La Malinche (her Indian name), the interpreter-mistress of Cortes who bore him a bastard son--is perhaps the most despised figure of all: a malinchista is an enemy who would open the country to foreign influences. Octavio Paz, the leading contemporary intellectual sees La Malinche and Cortes as "symbols of a secret conflict which still has not been resolved." These two embody the love-hate dichotomy splitting the Mexican soul and their union (Cortes and La Malinche) produced what may be symbolically regarded as the first Mexican, the first mestizo, who was murdered by his own kind.

Mexico and the U. S.

Mexicans do not forget the conflicts between our two nations. The war for Texas independence and the Mexican-American War of 1846 led to the loss of almost half of the territory formerly the colony of New Spain and part of the new nation of Mexico. General Winfield Scott's army penetrated as far as Mexico City and attacked Chapultepec Castle (the "Halls of Montezuma" in the Marine Hymn) valiantly defended to the death by young army cadets now memorialized in a monument to the Ninos Heroes (Child-Heroes) at the foot of the castle hill. As if the loss of what is today California, Northern Arizona, New Mexico and Texas were not enough, in 1854 Santa Anna (the victor at the Alamo) sold the southern part of Arizona and a small strip of New Mexico to the U. S. to pay his army.

The Mexican Government

The dominate political party is the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Government is involved in many, many industries, completely as in the case of the government monopoly of the oil (PEMEX) and partially in some other industries, all banks, and in certain service sectors.

The current president is Miguel de la Madrid, an economist who received some of his training at Harvard (M.A. in Economics). His six-year term of office will end in 1988 which means that in 1987 speculation will begin about PRI's presidential candidate because no president may succeed himself. According to an unwritten convention the candidate is selected by former presidents of the nation who continue to hold a great deal of leadership power although they can never be a candidate for president again.

Education

Mexico's compulsory ten years of schooling includes primary and secondary schools. At both levels public and private education is attempting to deal with a large population "bulge" of 42.9% in the age group of 0-14 years. Despite the fact that the government expropriated the Church's property after the Revolution of 1910, religious order operate most of the private schools. Nevertheless the government still exercises control over the curriculum through the centralized Secretariate of Public Education in Mexico City.

The American School of Guadalajara

Originally founded in 1915, the American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. ("Inc." in English) is a private bi-national school offering instruction in English and Spanish to over 1250 students from Pre-Kindergarden through Grade 12. Both the Mexican Department of Education and the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges accredit its programs, and sudents may earn either or both a U.S. high school diploma or a "Bachillerato" (needed for entrance in a Mexican university).

Approximately one-half of the faculty is native because Mexican law requires that foreign nationals may not be employed, unless no qualified Mexican citizen can be found. Some fifty-five per cent hold valid U. S. teaching credentials.

The school, divided into two parts (one for the lower grades and a second for the high school) is located in an excellent area of the city, close to hospitals and recreational facilities as well as bus lines. Classes are in session from 8:00 to 2:00 p.m. with primary grades' instruction divided into eight forty-minute periods and secondary into seven forty-five minute periods. A short lunch break takes place at 11:00. Students have club meetings, athletic practices, etc. after 2:00 p.m. Ten American Schools in Mexico have organized a league for sports, games, and other types of exchanges as students spend a week at another school. N.B. There are two-week vacations at both Christmas and Easter.

The school has had four student teachers from Radford University and several from the University of Arizona. With the turnover in faculty, jobs are often available in Mexico or other countries. With your experience you would qualify for such a position without the normal requirement of two years of teaching in the U.S. The American School of Guadalajara has a sister school in the U. S. and ties to Lesley College providing opportunities to earn a Master's degree in three years.

Mexican Food

At heart, both culturally and racially, Mexico is an

Indian nation, fundamentally different from other societies of the Western Hemisphere. With the largest population, Mexico is the most advanced of the predominately Indian nations in Latin America. This "Indianness" stands out in one area--in its essentially corn-and-beans diet begun thousands of years before the Spaniards arrived. Except for the very poor, traditional dishes are now more richly supplemented with meat than in the past, but even in the homes of the urban elite, where white bread (Pan Bimbo) has replaced tortillas, beans remain a staple.

Your previous experience with food served at "Mexican" restaurantes in the U. S. will not prepare you for Mexican regional variations and for the very highly spiced dishes characteristic of the central region, especially the national dish--guajolote con mole--turkey in a sauce containing serveral types of chile peppers and unsweetened chocolate. Ask if the dish is "picante," literally "does it bit." If you do eat something too spicy hot, don't drink a beverage. Eating bread or a tortilla with a bit of salt seems to help, or at least to distract you from the pain.

Remember to keep your hands above the table and not to attempt to eat everything put on your plate. A guest is expected to leave a little portion of something on the plate. This is considered proper etiquette and does not insult the hostess.

The Mexican breakfast is in two parts: immediately upon arising, or on the way to work, a cup of coffee and some kind of bread, and at sometime between 9:30 and 11:00, a second breakfast, sometimes called a merienda , of eggs, beans and tortillas, perhaps with bacon, ham, or sausage. The main meal of the day is in the afternoon, between 1:30 and 4:00. Later a very light snack--usually a cup of coffee and bit of pastry is served between 5:00 and 7:00. The traditional evening meal, the cena is between 8:00 and 10:00. In restaurants, look for the comida corriente as the best buy, because it includes in one price a complete meal.

The Mexican Peril-Turista

All domestic water systems carry sub-strains of the bacterium which causes "turista." Any traveler is likely to suffer diarrhea upon encounters with unfamiliar sub-species of that bacterium and is most susceptible when moving north or south across latitudinal zones. In other words, Mexicans traveling in the U. S. sometimes suffer Sitting Bull's Revenge.

You can avoid the problem of turista, if you use these precautions:
1. Use agua potable (potable water) from a bottle for drinking or tooth brushing. Never use tap water.
2. For cold drinks, use only refrigerated, bottled beverages.

Beer, wine, bottled water (Tehuacan or Penafiel), carbonated (con gas) or uncabonated (sin gas) are best for drinking. Another alternative to soft drinks is sidral (apple cider)--a very good, not terribly sweet brand is manzanita.
3. Beware of ice in any other form than cubes. Usually ice cubes are made with agua potable .
4. NEVER, NEVER EAT ANYTHING PREPARED OR SOLD ON THE STREET. You do so at your peril. Most educated Mexicans shun such temptations.

Joe Graedon of the People's Pharmacy reports that Pepto-Bismol Tablets cut down significantly on traveler's diarrhea. Minimum effective dose: 2 tablets in the morning and two at night, from the day before you leave until two days after returning. For even better protection--take 6 tablets per day, two with each meal. However, do not plan to do this more than two weeks.

Money

The basic unit of the currency is the peso, divided into 100 centavos. However with recent extraordinary rates of inflation (100%+), coins with denominations of less than 1 peso are used only for telephone tokens. Because of inflation and the government's policy of a floating exchange rate, you should keep your money in travelers' checks of $20 denominations and not carry any more than the equivalent of $20 to $50 in Mexican currency. Have two billfolds or coin purses to keep Mexican and U.S. money separate.

While it is handy to have some U. S. currency in bills, travelers' checks issued by American Express, Master Card, Thomas Cook, or City Bank of New York can be easily exchanged and are safer. Always banks give the best, legal exchange rate (open 9:00-1:00, Monday-Friday, with some exceptions). If you go to a bank, look for a sign "Cambios" or show a teller your travelers' checks. You may have to go to two different tellers to complete the transaction--one for approval and writing up the documentation and the second actually counts the money out to you. While you can get a better exchange rate on the street, it is not wise to get involved in this type of illegal purchase of dollars. However, you may get a better price on an item or on your room and board by agreeing to make payment in dollars.

Master Card, Visa, and American Express cards are accepted by large stores, hotels, airlines, etc. Your charge card bill will be in dollars at the rate current at the time of the expenditure in addition to an exchange fee . As in the U. S., keep your credit cards safe. You may be asked to produce additional proof of your identity, i.e. passport, your tourist card (which is free), or birth certificate.

If you travel by plane, you will find a bank branch in the

airport for exchanging money, or you may wish to have some currency when you arrive. Even small local banks in the U.S. can arrange for purchase of foreign currency, but with constant devaluation, you will get a poor exchange rate. If you want to see the process in action, read the daily quotations in the Wall Street Journal to follow changes in the dollar and peso. The American School of Guadalajara can arrange for you to have money exchanged.

Carry your wallet inside your coat pocket, never in the rear pockets. Carry your purse under your arm. When traveling on public transportation, bus or subway, try to position yourself so that no one can brush up against you. Pickpockets on the Mexico City subways are especially famous for skill in slitting a purse and removing a billfold or coin purse.

La IVA

Mexico now has an ad valorum tax levied on most all goods and services you will purchase; this tax (la IVA) is 15% of the value of the bill. If you leave a tip at a restaurant, examine your bill to be sure there are no "errors" in the listing of changes or in addition, then figure 10 to 15% of the bill depending upon the quality of service. Also expect to provide small tips to the person who shows you to your seat in a theatre, but not taxi drivers or servants.

Public Holidays

Mexico observes the following holidays: January 1, New Year's Day, February 5, Constitution Day, March 1, Benito Juarez Day (the only pure-blood Indian ever to be elected president of the nation), Easter (Friday through Monday and in some cases from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday), May 1, Labor Day, September 16, Independence Day, October 12, Dia de la Raza, November 20, Revoluction Day, and December 25, Christmas. Schools normally have at least a week of vacation time during Holy Week.

Religious Services in English

Gethsemane Baptist Church, Colmos 2148
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Tepetya, and Fray Juan de Zumarraga, Colonia Chapality have masses in English.
Society of Christ Science, Circunvalacion Providencia 1378
St. Mark's Episcopal, Azteca and Chichimecas, in Colonia Lomas del Valle (both Episcopal and Lutheran services)
St. Paul Methodist Church, Monte las Animas and Monte Caucaso.

Additional Readings

Brenner, Anita. Idols behind Altars Art history.
Brenner, Anita. The Wind that Swept Mexico A pictorial history of the 1910 Revolution.
Jennings, Gary. Aztec popularizing historical novel of

pre-Colombian Mexico.
Lewis, Oscar. The Children of Sanchez A study of poor of Mexico City.
Lewis, Oscar. Life in a Mexican Village, Tepotzotlan Restudied Anthropological study of a village.
McBride, Robert H., ed. Mexico and the United States Relations and conflicts.
Paz, Octavio. The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico Important philosophical work.
Riding, Alan. The Distant Neighbor Exhaustive, but sometimes dull book on modern history.
Simpson, Lesley Byrd. Many Mexicos History, politics, and sociology.
Wolf, Eric. Sons of the Shaking Earth Anthropology and archeology of Indians.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Geography

The Dominican Republic, which occupies two-thirds of the island of La Espanola, is about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Outside of the capital city, Santo Domingo, and other port cities, the terrain is mountainous with a maritime tropical climate. Temperatures vary within a range of 60 to 90 degree F in all seasons. In the higher altitudes, of course, it is slightly cooler. A rainy season with a daily tropical downpour lasts from May through October or November.

The estimated population of more than 6, 416,000 is primarily mulatto, a mixture of Negro and Spanish (73%) in addition to 16% Caucasian and 11% Negro. More than one-half of the population lives in urban areas, the other half in rural areas works primarily in sugar cane production. There are large concentrations of foreign minority groups from Haiti, Puerto Rico and other West Indian nations and about 20,000 U. S. citizens reside in the Dominican Republic.

History

After Columbus dicovered the island in his first trip to the New World La Espanola became the staging area for further exploration and conquest. Therefore, Santo Domingo, founded in 1496, is the oldest European city in the Western Hemisphere. The Spanish built the first church, the first cathedral, and the first university on the island, but after the conquest of Mexico, the island was not as important to the crown. Partly because of Spanish failure to defend the colony, the French succeed in occupying the western end of the island. In 1697, Spain ceded that portion of the island to France. Thus, due to these historical events, La Espanola has two entirely different language and cultural groups. People often expect to find the same kind of overwhelming African influence, including voodoo, etc. in the Dominican Republic, but its culture is throughly Spanish.

After forming an independent republic, Haitians conquered the whole island in 1822 and held it for twenty some years. Juan Pablo Duarte, hero of Dominican independence, led a movment to drive out the Haitians and establish an independent republic, but the Dominicans voluntarily returned to the Spanish Empire in 1861. True independence did not come until 1865. Relations with the U. S. have included a series of direct military and economic interventions by our govenment. On several occasions the U.S. established a receivership over the Dominican customs duties to force payments to foreign bondholders.

In 1930, Rafael L. Trujillo, who came to prominence as a commmander of the army, took power. His dictatorship lasted until 1961. While considerable economic development took place under Trujillo, the Dominican government experienced mismanagement and corruption on an unprecedented scale. Unfortunately this tradition of corrupt political leaders has

continued for few of the presidents have not used their office to benefits themselves and their families. Politics in the Dominican Republic are complicated by a military elite ready to overthrow the elected government. In general the same cycle as can be observed in other Latin American countries--a civilian government, overthrown by a military junta failing in turn to meet the populace's legitimate demands for progress and freedom.

The current president, Joaquin Balaguer, has served three previous (but not consecutive) terms in that post.

Clothing and Other Useful Information

Dress is casual, but Dominican women wear the latest fashions and use more make-up and jewelry than you would see outside of the largest cities in the U. S. You do not need heavy-weight clothing, but if you will be there during the rainy season, you need a good umbrella or raincoat.

The electrical current is exactly the same as the U. S. 110 volts; 60 cycles.

To drive a motor vehicle in the D. R. you need a valid driver's lisense, but before you get behind the wheel, make sure you know local driving reegulations.

Daylight savings time is observed all year long despite the fact that the Dominican Republic is located in Eastern Time Zone. The following are national holidays when you will find that everything closes: New Year's Day, Nuestra Senora de la altagracia (Jan. 21), the Birthday of Duarte (Jan. 26), national Independence Day (Feb.27), Labor Day (May 1), Restoration Day (Aug. 16), Nuetra Senora de las Mercedes (Sept. 24), Christmas Day, Good Friday and Corpus Christi Day (60 days after Good Friday).

Entry Requirements

U. S. citizens need a Tourist Card (U. S. $5.00) and either a valid passport or other proof of citizenship, i.e., birth certificate or voter's registration card. There is also a $10 departure tax for visitors leaving the country. Both these taxes are paid at the point of entry and exit (usually the international airport).

Education

Eight years of education is compulsory in the Dominican Republic, but the population growth in the age of those attending school (0-14) is 47.5% which explains why only 60% of that age group attend school and a literacy rate of only 62%. Since public schools are overcrowded families send, if at all possible, their children to private schools. Religious order operate many of these schools and, until very recently, the official church of the Dominican Republic was Roman Catholic with tolerance of other religions. However, 98% of the population is at least nominally Catholic.

The Carol Morgan School

Carol Morgan School is a non-profit, privately owned school with instruction in English from Pre-Kinder through Grade 12. Sponsored and recognized by the Office of Overseas Schools of the Department of State, this fully accredited school (Southern Association of Schools and Colleges) was started in 1933 by Mrs. Carol Morgan Appleby, the wife of an American missionary. Pre-Kinder through Grade 6 operates using the self contained clasroom system. The scondary division,. grade 7 throuh 12, has a departmentalized seven-period day. A school-to-school program exists with the public schools of Fairfax County.

The majority of the teachers at Carol Morgan are U. S. certified teachers along with teachers from the Dominican Republic and other nations. The professional staff includes a learning disabilities specialist as well as a teacher experienced in dealing with gifted children, nurses, guidance counselors, school psychologist, librarians, computer specialists and fine arts teachers. Teachers may participate in a program of graduate education courses offered through an extension program of the University of Alabama.

Caribbean Cuisine

Other than straight out of the tree (guave, papaya, coconut, mango, etc.) or directly out of the sea (lobster, conch, shrimp, or fish) Caribbean cuisine is based on a spicy mixture, usually containing tomatoes (though not as "hot" as Mexican food). Be sure to sample the "national" dish, "sancocho" derived from a Spanish stew (with a meat base of goat, chichen, pork, or beef) with locally available vegetables (sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, and plaintain). A popular fast food often served is "chicharrones de pollo," small pieces of chichen marinated in soy sauce, dipped in flour, and quickly deep fried. The daily dish is rice and beans, particularly black beans, sometimes called "moros."

Some fish and shellfish found in tropical waters may be poisonous at certain times during the year: most of the year--puffers, trigger fish, and parrot fish; sporadically and in certain locations--barracuda, mackerel, snapper, and seabass. Unfortunately sometimes one type of fish is substituted for another in both markets and restaurants. Neither appearance, nor taste will identify a poisonous fish, but be aware that the symptoms are: vomiting, diarrhea, numbness and tingling of the face, lips and fingers, beginniing from 30 minutes to 4 hours after eating the fish. Attempt to induce vomiting and to administer an enema to remove the fish from the digestive tract. If breathing difficulties and/or convulsions occur, seek emergency medical help immediately.

Health Problems

The most common illnesses are: upper respiratory infections, gastro-intestinal disturbances such as diarrhea, and severe sunburn. Precautionary measures recommended by the Medical Unit of the U. S. embassy include: 1. Drink bottled water or carbonated beverages.

2. Take proper precautions against sunburn and biting insects. There is some incidence of malaria and the mission recommends prophylaxis in the form of a drug, chloroquine (Aralen) taken once a week: 500 mgms for persos weighing over 100 lbs.

3. Do not swim along beaches in the proximity of Santo Domingo due to urban polution.

Churches with English Services

Santo Domingo School Chapel, Bolivar AVe. 688-0111
Dominican Baptist Church, 401 Bolivar Ave. 682-4261
First Baptist Church, 32 Sarasota Ave. 532-4963
Dominican Evangelist Church, 19 de Marzo 49-B 682-4537
7th Day Adventist Church, 18 Juan Sanchez Ramirez St. 689-9035
Israeli Center of the Dominican Republic, Sarasota Ave. 533-1675

Additional Readings

Rood, Carlton A. A Dominican Chronicle Unfortunately there is not much available in English.